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SUBJECT: NORTHERN UGANDA: PEACE PROCESS UPDATE

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Tim Shortley, Senior Advisor on Conflict Resolution, traveled to Kampala with AF A/S Secretary Jendayi Frazer and remained in the region to meet with key officials in Uganda, Southern Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo from September 5-17. The GOU's lead negotiator at the Juba peace talks, Ruhakana Ruganda, was extremely pleased with A/S Frazer's remarks that the U.S. supported the peace process and that it was not open-ended. Ruganda made several recommendations for ways in which the peace process could be expedited, including conduct of full-time negotiations and the strengthening of the mediation secretariat. Betty Bigombe, former GOU negotiator with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), reported that it was clear from her recent conversations with LRA leader Joseph Kony and other interlocutors that the LRA was listening to the U.S. Close Kony associates do not believe he is ready to make a deal. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Senior Advisor for Conflict Resolution Tim Shortley visited Uganda, Southern Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo from September 5-17. Shortley and P/E Chief met with a range of GOU officials, international donors, members of parliament, military, and non-governmental organization officials. Senior Advisor Shortley used these meetings to reiterate U.S. objectives and support for the ongoing peace process in Juba. He also solicited ideas and information on ways in which the process could be moved forward. Shortley also shared A/S Frazer's press conference transcripts with our interlocutors.

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FOCUSED U.S. MESSAGE
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¶3. (SBU) During his visit, Shortley explained his facilitation role in coordinating the regional aspects of the LRA problem. The U.S. believes that the LRA problem is part of larger regional tensions, and that its cross-border nature involving Uganda, Congo, and Southern Sudan required attention in order to bring peace to the LRA-affected areas. Shortley outlined key areas for focus: (1) support for a timeline for the negotiations, which should not be open-ended (2) emphasizing to the mediator and the parties that negotiations should be full-time (3) thinking through scenarios and formulas for an end game (4) being prepared to handle the needs of returnees, primarily by getting the Ugandan Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan officially launched to attract sufficient donor funds.

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GOU NEGOTIATING TEAM REVIEW OF CONSULTATIONS
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¶4. (SBU) On September 6, Shortley, P/E Chief, and USAID Peace Support Team Chief were invited to join the GOU's internal debrief of the consultations held to date on Agenda Item Three:

Accountability and Reconciliation. Minister of Internal Affairs Ruhakana Rugunda, who is the lead GOU negotiator, and other members of the negotiating team, reviewed the messages that they heard from Ugandans during consultations in Adjumani, Gulu, Lira, and Soroti. The team's deliberations revealed that throughout the consultations, the team was flexible and made changes in how the discussions were conducted to accommodate local conditions and demands.

15. (SBU) Rugunda and other team members stated that they were extremely pleased with A/S Frazer's comments during her visit. Rugunda argued that focused attention on the peace process was timely and could facilitate the successful execution of the talks. Rugunda and Minister of State for Defense Ruth Nankabirwa stated their willingness to assist U.S. efforts to advance the peace process. Rugunda requested that Shortley help strengthen the GOSS mediation effort, particularly the Secretariat. Nankabirwa explained that she had always been a proponent of "Plan B," a military strike against the LRA, which she said was actually her "Plan A." However, she said that progress made at the talks persuaded her to take a less vocal stance.

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RUGUNDA MAKES PLEA FOR FULL-TIME TALKS
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16. (SBU) In Rugunda's view, a peace deal could be completed in a matter of months if expedited with better time management of the negotiating sessions and improved administration of the financial aspects of support for the talks. The LRA was looking for ways to talk about money, not peace, and manipulating donors, according to Rugunda. He elaborated that a clearly stated structure of leadership and administration would significantly decrease the amount of time wasted at Juba. For example, technical teams could now be drafting the terms of the cease-fire and the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration.

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17. (SBU) He specifically asked Shortley to press the GOSS and Machar to conduct the talks full-time. This would require more time and attention by Machar, but also a fully-authorized deputy to conduct the negotiations in Machar's absence. Rugunda also advocated more full-time support and attention for the process by U.N. Special Envoy for LRA-Affected Areas Chissano. Support for Chissano's offices in Kampala and Juba would be helpful, according to Rugunda.

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KONY'S SECURITY CONCERNS
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18. (SBU) Betty Bigombe, former GOU negotiator with the LRA, met with Shortley on September 9 and again on September 17 after her trip to northern Uganda. Bigombe is now working for the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C. Bigombe shared with Shortley her recent conversations with the LRA leaders and other commanders. According to Bigombe, A/S Frazer's comments and the Arusha Agreement between Uganda and Congo (in which Congo agreed to take action against the LRA in 90 days) had gotten Kony's attention. Bigombe had spoken with Kony on September 14 and said that she reminded him that the LRA had not done anything to show that it was serious about negotiations. She told Kony that releasing women and children and assembling at Rikwangba would be indications that the LRA was interested in a peaceful settlement. Kony told Bigombe that he could not release the women and children because "they would be evidence to support the International Criminal Court (ICC) charges that the LRA had abducted people." Bigombe told Kony that there were thousands of former abductees in northern Uganda that could testify against him. He did not need to keep the women and children he had.

19. (SBU) Kony asked Bigombe to explain what it meant to be on the U.S. terrorist list. Bigombe did not have enough information to clarify for him, but promised to get the answer for him. He also wanted to know when the 90-day clock started ticking from the Arusha declaration. Kony also asked Bigombe to explain how the former

leaders of RENAMO, Pol Pot, Charles Taylor, and a Guatemalan leader were handled and what security guarantees they were given.

¶10. (SBU) Bigombe urged a trusted intermediary, Yusuf Odek, to explain to Kony and Otti, in simple terms, what their options were. She had already told Otti over the telephone that remarks that the process should take two or three years were not acceptable and would not make the ICC issue disappear. During a second call, Otti threatened to call off talks if the LRA was not given \$2 million for its consultations. (Note: Some observers believe that the LRA's demand for USD 2 million is based on a GOU payment made to the former West Bank Nile Front to surrender its arms. End Note.) During a call with Kony, Bigombe claimed to have received assurances from Kony that the LRA would be back at the negotiating table in October. Kony said that the LRA wanted to have joint-consultations with the GOU after the LRA consultations took place at Rikwangba. Meanwhile, Acholi paramount chief Rwot Acana went to Rikwangba to meet with the LRA about the consultations. At this point, the LRA leaders were calling for all former LRA combatants to come to Rikwangba. The LRA requested that local and traditional leaders invite former LRA to the meetings.

¶11. (SBU) According to Odek, he does not see Kony and Otti leaving the bush immediately after a peace settlement. Kony reportedly was "genuinely scared" that coming out of Garamba National Park would result in his death. Odek did not believe that Kony would prefer to assess the situation. Odek did not believe that there was continuing contact between Kony and Khartoum, despite lingering suspicions. The LRA continued to be concerned about delays in cash disbursements from the Government of Southern Sudan's Secretariat and wants to be facilitated with more funds. Odek said that he was often approached to talk to Kony and Otti but that he did not have a Thuraya satellite telephone, so his ability to weigh in with the LRA leaders was severely limited.

¶12. (SBU) Bigombe also learned from a CARITAS worker who delivers food to Rikwangba that LRA fighters that come to the assembly area to pick up the food have made repeated requests to him to bring back carpenters and masons. The CARITAS worker stated that the LRA wants to build more permanent structures in the park. The worker was becoming increasingly worried for his life on each trip because he had not complied with the LRA requests.

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COMMENT
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¶10. (SBU) Reactions to the public U.S. stand on the peace process

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are generally positive, but some express caution or concern over U.S. pressure. Government interlocutors and some non-governmental organizations have praised recent U.S. efforts. This includes some of the groups that called for a Special Envoy, such as Resolve and Uganda-CAN, even though they oppose a military resolution to the conflict. President Museveni and the Ugandan military are anxious to deal with the LRA as a security problem, and welcome a hard-line.

Other government civilian officials, such as Rugunda and many northern leaders, support an expedited process with clear direction that addresses domestic political considerations, such as public opinion in the north. Rugunda, for example, would view a military solution as a last resort. The LRA's diaspora spokespersons publicly denounced U.S. statements and the Arusha Agreement's timetable for Congolese action against the LRA. However, Bigombe believes that the LRA leadership at Garamba National Park appears to be taking the situation and their future more seriously. We continue to monitor the LRA's threats of war and potential chilling affects on returns.

BROWNING